

Effective Seed Storage in Timor-Leste (ESS)

Funded by USAID, Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance - OFDA

Quarterly Report

April to June 2013



Insert: meeting with a community in one of new target areas

Country Contact	Headquarter Contact	Project Summary	
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		Start Date	11 August 2011
		End Date	11 February 2015
		Report Date	30 July 2013
		OFDA	
		Obligated	
		Amount	US\$ 1,497,501

Program Summary

The majority of farmers in the target districts of rural Timor-Leste rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, these farmers face high percentages of post-harvest seed loss (30% in the case of maize¹) due to a lack of appropriate on-farm storage and poor seed quality. These factors, combined with other challenges (i.e., climate change, low soil fertility, poor access to water, low levels of livelihood diversification, dominance of traditional practices including 'slash and burn' agriculture), put seed system security at risk over time. To address these problems, Mercy Corps is implementing the USAID/OFDA funded Effective Seed Storage (ESS) in Timor-Leste Program since August 2011. The program is designed to be sustainable through an innovative market-based approach to increase access to improved storage systems linked with capacity building of farmers and extension workers, and through supporting activities to connect farmers with viable input and output markets.

The ESS program successfully introduced effective post-harvest seed storage solutions to 3,120 rural farmers in 4 sub-districts. Based on the success of the program and the continued need for seed system security throughout rural Timor-Leste, Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), carried out a nation-wide expansion of the ESS program. The expansion targets neighboring districts/sub-districts of current target areas that can be easily scaled up through the currently supported manufacturers.

This report covers the second quarter of the second phase of Effective Seed Storage in Timor-Leste. It provides a summary of activities implemented during the period from April – June 2013.

Performance Summary

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security		Objective: Sustainable post-harvest protection of seeds and grain stocks improve crop production and livelihoods in rural Timor-Leste			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Original: 27,503 IDPs: 0	Expansion: 240,000 (no IDPs)	Budget: \$247,501 with addition of \$1,250,000 for the first year of the expansion	
Beneficiaries Reached		Original: 34,993 ² IDPs: 0	Expansion: 0	Amount Spent (Total): \$398,916	
Geographic Area (s)		Ainaro and Maufahi District – Timor-Leste			
Sub- Sector: Seed System Security					
OFDA Indicator		Baseline	Target	Progress (Date)	Last Day of Report Period
Projected increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed systems activities/ agricultural inputs for beneficiary households		Baseline is carried out in July 2013	To be determined by the baseline	-	June 2013

¹ http://www.fao.org/emergencies/country_information/list/asia/timorleste/en/

² Calculated from number of households (HHs) buying the seed storage system plus additional farmers/HHs trained in post harvest training times average number of HH members in the target areas ((3,378 HH + 2,266 HH) * 6.2 Individual/HH) = 34,993 individuals)

Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural inputs activities, by sex	0	240,000	24,556 (37% female)	June 2013
Additional Indicators				
Percentage of beneficiaries reporting decreased post-harvest losses for seeds	Baseline is carried out in July 2013	To be determined by the baseline	-	-
Increase in availability of quality seed during planting season	Baseline is carried out in July 2013	To be determined by the baseline	-	-
Number of farmers with access to BCC materials/training	0	40,000	-	-
Percentage of farmers adopting improved technique(s)	0	To be determined from the baseline survey	-	-
Number of farmers with access to improved seed storage system, by sex	0	40,000	3,508 (37% female)	June 2013

Sector Summary

This report is an update of the quarterly report as submitted in April 2013. The focus of activities for this reporting period are 1) CRS and local NGO partners' start-up, 2) partnership arrangement with new/additional blacksmiths, and 3) linkage with input supplier. In addition, during this reporting period Mercy Corps and CRS conducted a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) workshop to develop M&E tools for the ESS by utilizing CRS' Simple Measurement of Indicators for Learning and Evidence-based Reporting (SMILER) methodology.

CRS & local NGO partners' project start-up

During this reporting period, CRS and Mercy Corps signed a sub-award agreement to formalize their partnership. They conducted a one-day project start-up meeting to discuss the project agreement and develop a common understanding of project. A formal review and final revision of project goals, objectives, indicators, and roles and responsibilities was conducted. CRS recruited and hired three new staff for this project: Project Manager, Technical Advisor, and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. CRS is working with three local partner organizations in eastern Timor-Leste. Each partner is responsible for community mobilization in one district with Caritas Baucau in Baucau, Kolegas de Paz in Viqueque, and Together Improving Development in Lautem. All local partners were selected based on their established presence in their respective regions/districts and proven track record of effective and efficient community mobilization and technical experience in agriculture.

In April, CRS conducted sub-recipient financial management assessments. These assessments analyze the organizations' capacity in ten areas: financial personnel, financial system, documentation and record keeping, internal control, financial reporting, inventory management, fixed assets, receivable, other assets and payables, and procurement. The assessment identified areas of improvement, which have been transformed into Corrective Action Plans. A one-day workshop was then conducted with the directors and finance staff to discuss the Corrective Action Plans and develop a timeframe for completion. In May, CRS held a three-day project start-up workshop with all partner staff. A complete review of the sub-recipient agreements and each organization proposed project plan was conducted.

Behavior Change Communication (BCC) materials were reviewed and finalized

In May 2013, Mercy Corps and CRS technical staff worked together to review BCC materials that were used previously during the pilot phase by incorporating CRS training materials and feedback from the pilot evaluation

report. The new BCC materials will include sticker to be posted on the storage unit presenting good practices in post-harvest handling, training/promotion module, and trainer's facilitation guide. These BCC materials guide participants through each community meeting from initial project introduction, training on seed storage and post-harvest handling, and voucher distribution. Participants will explore potential obstacles and brainstorm solutions to be prepared for these situations when they arise in the communities. The training/promotion activity utilizes adult experiential learning methods in which each participant will be expected to demonstrate understanding of the materials by presenting to the group.

Silo designs were reviewed and finalized

During this reporting period, Mercy Corps conducted rapid prototyping of the silo designs incorporating feedback from previous program beneficiaries, the final evaluation report of the pilot phase, and CRS team members and partners as well as two manufacturers from the pilot phase in Ainaro and Manufahi districts. Two silo designs were then finalized. It was determined to maintain the design of a small sized silo (35 liter capacity) but redesign the large silo (75 liter capacity) with a very large opening to be combined with Grain Pro bags.

New additional silo manufacturers were identified and engaged

In June 2013, a business opportunity workshop was held in Dili to provide business and financial management training to the identified blacksmiths participating in the ESS program. Out of 19 blacksmiths who were identified previously across Timor-Leste, 17 participated in the workshop and expressed their willingness to participate actively in the program and have signed the interest letter to Mercy Corps and CRS. Mercy Corps and CRS are currently preparing contracts with these new blacksmiths. Meanwhile, the contracts with the two manufacturers from the pilot phase were renewed during this reporting to expand their business to their neighboring districts.

After the workshop, two input suppliers were given the opportunity to promote their products and services to support these blacksmiths to be silo manufacturers. One challenge with this is that neither of these two suppliers currently transports materials to the eastern districts. CRS and Mercy Corps will continue to work with these businesses to develop a sustainable model for transportation of materials. Additional canvassing of businesses in Dili and the districts will be a high priority in next quarter to identify additional input suppliers.

Cross-Cutting Themes N/A

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation System for the project was developed using CRS' Simple Measurement of Indicators for Learning and Evidence-based Reporting (SMILER) methodology. The SMILER four-day workshop brought together key programmatic and M&E staff from both Mercy Corps and CRS to create a comprehensive M&E system. This included communication maps to ensure beneficiary accountability and stakeholder engagement. Data flow maps were developed to ensure project information is systematically collected, analyzed and shared throughout project cycles. All supporting data collection tools and reporting templates were created with instruction sheets to ensure both Mercy Corps and CRS staff utilize tools accurately.

CRS and Mercy Corps recruited and hired a consultant to conduct the baseline assessment. Johan Van Duijn was selected based on his extensive experience in conducting assessments and previous work with both CRS and Mercy Corps. The baseline tool was developed by Mr. Van Duijn and reviewed, translated, and field-tested by Mercy Corps and CRS staff before finalizing. Four different project districts were randomly selected for data collection. Partner staff conducted meetings with local leader in these areas to each identify 100 households to

participate in the baseline for a nationwide total of 400 households. Baseline data collection and analysis will be complete by end of July 2013.

Coordination

During May and June 2013, Mercy Corps and partners introduced the project to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries at both the national and district levels. The project was also introduced to the district government officials and local leaders who have been included in discussions on village and beneficiary selection criteria. Local leaders have agreed to be involved in mobilizing communities by organizing initial project introduction meetings where the community will review beneficiary criteria and self-select project beneficiaries.

Success Story: Mario's Story

Written by Emily Baron

The ESS Program is working with small manufacturers like Mario to develop a market system for high-quality and affordable metal storage silos. These small businesses have transformed farmers' ability to store their vital harvest of seeds and grain, keeping them in optimal condition until households need to use them. Initially piloted in two districts, the ESS Program is now working with silo manufacturers in ten districts of Timor-Leste.



Before the program began helping Mario's new business making containers to store grain and seeds in 2012, the future for his wife and three children was uncertain. With high unemployment in rural Timor-Leste, Mario looked destined to be a subsistence farmer for the rest of his life, like others in his community.

But with the support of the program, Mario's business is now booming—he has sold 1,360 of the silos which protect farmers' seeds from rodents, rot and insect infestation. While some of these are subsidized and sold to the most vulnerable farmers for a cheaper price, Mario has also built a steady retail trade and is selling full-priced products in local markets and in villages. He is employing five local men, and high sales have ignited the group's work ethos and they frequently toil long hours six days a week dedicatedly hammering together the blue stainless steel containers. Mario is putting his share of the profits towards his children's schooling and foundations are already being laid for a bigger and better family home behind his wooden shack.

The business training provided by Mercy Corps taught Mario how to introduce simple book-keeping practices to better manage his business, and how to promote the benefits of the silos to farmers, helping him to maximize sales when he takes to the road to sell his product to the rural target communities identified by Mercy Corps as most in need of the product.

Mario says this experience of starting a business has changed the way he looks at old problems in his community, and now he is starting to see possible solutions where once things seemed impossible. In the last few months he has started work on new metal products to expand his business, including rainwater harvesting containers and cold-storage boxes for fish. "When I was a farmer it felt like things for me and my family would never change. Now with the profits I've made from my new business supported by Mercy Corps, it seems anything is possible." Mario said.